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District of Arizona*

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BORDER OFFICIAL SENTENCED TO 9 YEARS IN PRISON

TUCSON – Fernando Arango, 52, of Rio Rico, Ariz., was sentenced today to nine years in prison by United States District Judge Cindy K. Jorgenson. The former border official pleaded guilty last October to Attempting to Possess with Intent to Distribute Cocaine.

Arango had been an officer with U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Mariposa Port of Entry in Nogales, Ariz. While acting in his official capacity, Arango counseled a person he thought to be a narcotics trafficker on how to purchase a recreation vehicle and how to have the vehicle altered with a hidden compartment that could be used to smuggle drugs into the United States. After the vehicle was purchased and altered, and Arango inspected the vehicle, the vehicle was driven through the Port of Entry by a person working with law enforcement on October 1, 2005.

Arango, who believed the vehicle contained 200 kilograms of cocaine, took action in his official capacity to insure that the vehicle was passed through the Port of Entry. Arango was paid \$50,000 in U.S. currency by a person working with law enforcement and subsequently arrested.

Judge Jorgenson, when imposing the sentence, told Arango that he betrayed his position of trust. She told Arango that her sentence of nine years was intended to punish Arango for his criminal conduct and to act as a deterrence to others.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Professional Responsibility. The prosecution is being handled by James T. Lacey, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-05-2033-TUC
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